

2019 Or Hadash Scholar In Residence Weekend – April, 5,6 & 7

Featuring Arie Kaplan

Topics: Jewish Contributions to Comedy, Comics and Superheroes

1. Friday 4/5/19: Scholar-in Residence dinner 6:30-7:30 at the synagogue, followed by 45 minute service and 1 hour talk (approx. 8:15-9:15pm) on:

“WIZARDS OF WIT: HOW JEWS REVOLUTIONIZED COMEDY”: This lecture is an analysis of Jewish involvement in comedy since World War Two, when their voice became more prominent and began to affect humor as a whole, a trend that continues to this day. The "Wizards of Wit" lecture would show the progression of comedy on a decade-by-decade basis. Arie will begin the lecture in the 1960s, when comedians like Jerry Lewis starred in movies like *The Bellboy*, in which Jewish characters were in the background. From there, Arie will talk about the 1970s, when people like Woody Allen confronted Jewish stereotypes head-on, in films like *Annie Hall*. Then it's on to the 1980s, when humorists like Nora Ephron and Billy Crystal fused a neo-Borscht Belt sensibility with a more contemporary, "cool" Jewish comedic persona in movies such as *When Harry Met Sally...* And finally, Arie will explore the more envelope-pushing 1990s and early 21st century, in which many of the characters and references are openly Jewish. Examples of this most recent trend include Sacha Baron Cohen (*Borat*), Ben Stiller (*Keeping the Faith*), and Adam Sandler (*You Don't Mess with the Zohan*).

2. Saturday, 4/6/19 Torah study: 8:45-9:00am (bagels and lox); 9-10:30, Torah Study topic is “FROM KRAKOW TO KRYPTON: A HISTORY OF JEWS AND COMIC BOOKS.”. Service 10:30-12, and lunch 12-1 pm.

“FROM KRAKOW TO KRYPTON: A HISTORY OF JEWS AND COMIC BOOKS.” You might not know it, but iconic superheroes like Superman, Batman, and Captain America were created by Jewish writers and cartoonists. In Arie Kaplan's entertaining, fun, and revealing lecture – *based on his award-winning nonfiction book of the same name* – he'll talk about the socioeconomic reasons that Jews were such a big part of the comic book field during the industry's so-called “Golden Age” (roughly 1938-1950). Clips will be shown from comic book-based movies like *X-Men* (2000), *Superman* (1978), and *American Splendor* (2003), as well as documentaries like *Comic Book Confidential* (1988) and *Comic Book Superheroes Unmasked* (2003). Arie will also talk about what it was like to write the book *From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books* (Jewish Publication Society, 2008). While Arie was writing the book, he interviewed many legendary comic book artists and writers, like Art Spiegelman (creator of the Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel *Maus*), Stan Lee (co-creator of Spider-Man, the Hulk, Iron Man, the Avengers, and The X-Men, among many other characters), and Al Jaffee (creator of the *MAD Magazine* "Fold-In" and various other comics and magazine features). In addition, Arie will talk about openly Jewish comic book characters (like the X-Men character Kitty Pryde) and the Jewish themes and ideas that are present in comic books like *Superman*, *Spider-Man*, *MAD Magazine*, *American Splendor*, *Tales From the Crypt*, and more.

3. Sunday 4/7/19: School program on Jewish roots of superheroes in comics and films.

Details:

Three 1-hour age-appropriate cartooning workshops with conversations on the topic of Jewish roots of Superheroes and/or comics and film.

Speaker Bio:

Arie Kaplan is an award-winning author, graphic novelist, comedy writer, and lecturer.

As a nonfiction author, Arie is perhaps most well-known for his book *From Krakow to Krypton: Jews and Comic Books*, which was named a Booklist Editors' Choice: Books for Youth Winner in 2009. *From Krakow to Krypton* was also a 2008 finalist for the National Jewish Book Award, a 2009 Sophie Brody Honor Book (awarded by the American Library Association), and a 2009 National "Best Books 2009" Awards Finalist (awarded by USA Book News).

Arie's other nonfiction books include *Saturday Night Live: Shaping TV Comedy and American Culture* (Lerner Publishing Group, 2014), and *Swashbuckling Scoundrels: Pirates in Fact and Fiction* (Lerner, 2015). He also authored a six-volume series of YA nonfiction books, called the *Shockzone: Games & Gamers* series (Lerner, 2014), which explored every aspect of the video game industry.

Arie wrote three of the stories in the children's short story anthology *5-Minute Avengers Stories*, which is out now from Disney Book Group's Marvel Press imprint. He has also penned a trio of *Little Golden Books* for Penguin Random House. One of those books is *The Jurassic Park Little Golden Books*, which was published last year. Recently, he wrote three *LEGO Star Wars* books for Scholastic. The most recent one, *The Official Force Training Manual*, was published in October 2018.

He is the author of several graphic novels, including *Speed Racer: Chronicles of the Racer* (IDW Publishing, 2008), *Shadow Guy & Gamma Gal: Heroes Unite* (Penguin Random House/Disney Club Penguin, 2010), and *The New Kid from Planet Glorf* (Capstone, 2013). As a comic book writer, Arie has written stories for DC Comics, Archie Comics, Dark Horse Comics, Bongo Comics, and other publishers. Those stories have featured such iconic characters as Superman, The Simpsons, Ben 10, Archie Andrews, and Shrek.

In addition to his work as an author and comic book writer, Arie is an in-demand public speaker, and he's lectured worldwide on various pop culture-related subjects, such as the history of Jews in film, the history of Jews in comic books, and the history of Jews in comedy. Previous lecture venues include the 92nd Street Y (NYC), the Skirball Cultural Center (LA), the Arkansas Literary Festival, the University of Pennsylvania, the Nevele Grand Resort (The Catskills), the Connecticut Historical Society (Hartford), the Kansas City Jewish Book Fair, Wichita State University, the Krakow Jewish Culture Festival (Krakow, Poland), the Trondheim Jewish Cultural Festival (Trondheim, Norway), and the International Festival of Comics and Games (Łódź, Poland).

When he's not tackling his latest manuscript or on the road on a speaking engagement, Arie works as a screenwriter for television, video games, and transmedia.

Over the past decade and a half, Arie has worked as a writer for such television shows as **TruTV Presents: World's Dumbest...**, the PBS Kids series *Cyberchase*, MTV's *TRL*, and the Cartoon Network series *Codename: Kids Next Door*. As a staff writer for *World's Dumbest*, Arie wrote comedy sketches and jokes for a cast that included Gilbert Gottfried, Judy Gold, Chuck Nice, Mike Britt, and Jared Logan. Over the years, Arie has also penned over two dozen humor articles for *MAD Magazine*.

Arie is also a veteran game writer. He wrote the screenplays for video games like the *House M.D.* game (Legacy Games, 2010), *Law & Order: Legacies* (Telltale Games, 2011), and *Disaster Hero* (Legacy Games). In addition to crafting the game script, story, and dialogue for the video game *Paranormal State: Poison Spring* (Legacy Games, 2013), Arie also wrote the in-game fiction for that project.

Please check out his website, www.ari kaplan.com.